

BASINGSTOKE CANAL

Introduction

The first canal in England was the Duke of Bridgewater's canal, with James Brindley as engineer, opened in 1761 to carry coal from Worsley to Manchester.¹ Its success was followed by the so called 'canal mania' which saw many canals promoted throughout England. Most linked industrial sites and carried low value, high bulk goods such as coal. The Basingstoke canal which opened in 1794 was in contrast serving an agricultural hinterland.

First Basingstoke canal proposal

In 1770 James Brindley proposed a cut off canal from Monkey Island near Maidenhead to Reading in connection with a scheme to improve the navigation of the Thames.² A meeting at the Town Hall in Basingstoke on 11 October 1770 supported building a 29 -canal from Basingstoke following the Loddon valley to join the Thames cut off canal in Ruscomb parish (see map below). Parliament rejected the Thames proposal on 21 February 1771 and the first attempt to build a canal to Basingstoke fell.³



Figure 1. Line of first proposed canal linking Basingstoke to the River Thames at Monkey Island

A new Proposal

Seven years later a meeting at Hartford Bridge in June 1777 set in train a new proposal to link Basingstoke with the Wey Navigation and thence to London⁴. The map, figure 2 below, shows the 44 mile long route to the River Wey Navigation which was followed for three miles until the Thames

¹ Priestley, J, *Historical Account of the Navigable Rivers, Canals and Railways of Great Britain*, London 1831 p 88

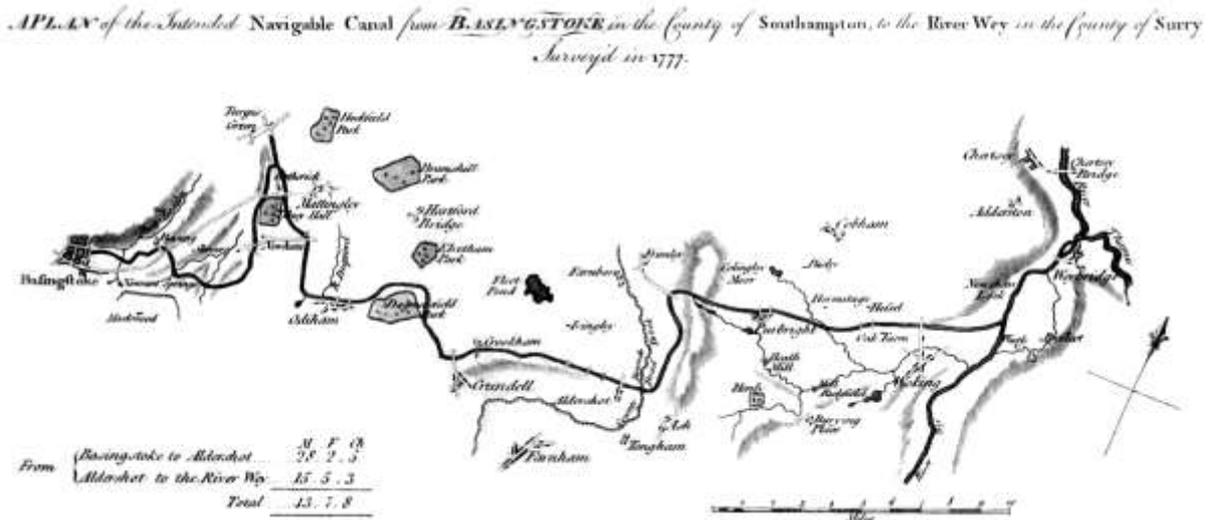
² HRO, 8M62/132a.

³ *Journal of the House of Commons, Volume 23*. London, 1771, p 194

⁴ Vine, P.A.L., *London's Lost Route to Basingstoke*, 2nd Edition, Stroud, 1994, p 7

was navigated for thirty miles to London Bridge a total of 70 miles. There was little opposition to the bill and it became law in 1778⁵

Figure 2



The loop around Tylney Hall was not built, instead a tunnel was built under Greywell Hill which shortened the distance to 37 miles.

Source: Basingstoke Canal Organisation

Then followed a hiatus as the necessary funds could not be raised. The Act authorised the raising of capital of £86,000 in £100 shares with no one person owning more than 40 shares (£4,000)⁶. A prospectus issued in 1783 anticipated that waggons from the West Country would transfer their goods onto the canal for the last leg of the journey.⁷ In 1786, following a meeting in Basingstoke, the proprietors issued an estimate of the expected annual carriage income of £9,671 with 50 per cent coming from the carriage to London of flour, timber and malt⁸. They calculated that the cost by canal would be only 30 per cent of that by waggon. This did not attract a full subscription list and they issued a radically revised estimate giving a lower income figure of £7,783 for 30,700 tons carried. Coal was listed as the main product carried and the estimates for timber, flour and malt all downgraded by between 12 per cent and 50 per cent. A surplus for subscribers of 7 ½ per cent was expected⁹. This attracted sufficient subscribers and on March 1788 the Company of Proprietors issued a list for all £86,000 shares¹⁰.

The Initial Proprietors

154 people subscribed £86,000. Chart 1 below shows the parts of the country where they lived. The Basingstoke area was taken to be a radius of ten miles from the town. Close to the canal included

⁵ 18 George III, Cap 75, 15th May 1778

⁶ *Ibid* p 23

⁷ TNA, RAIL 1019/6, 1783

⁸ *Ibid.* 1786

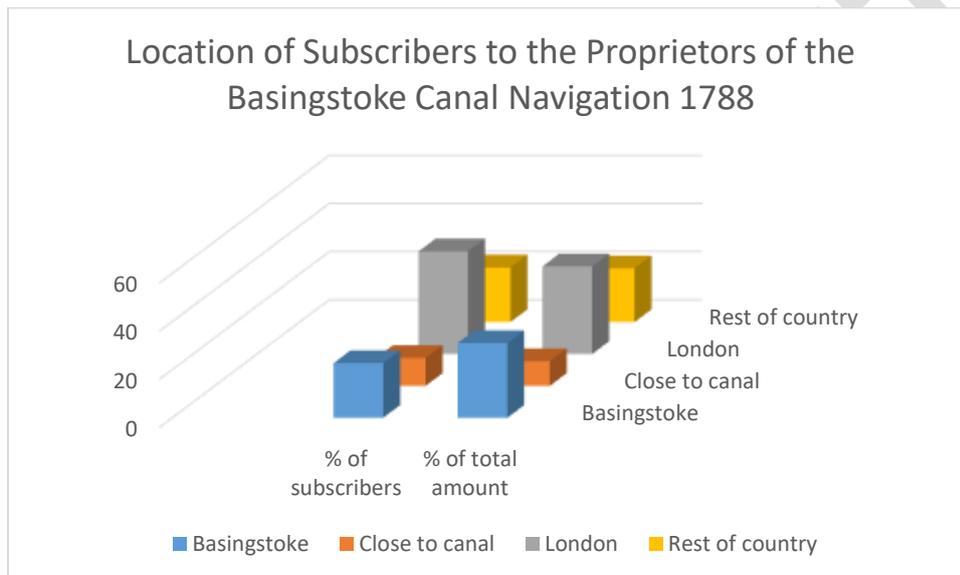
⁹ *Ibid.* 9, June 1787

¹⁰ HRO, 44M69/G1/10

people living within ten miles of the canal as it made its way to Weybridge. The London group included a large number of proprietors grouped in the centre of the city and the rest of the country included a significant number from the West Midlands where canals were proving to be successful.

These broad groupings are in some ways misleading. Only four people subscribed for the maximum of 40 shares. Three of these were members of the peerage who are recorded in the Basingstoke set. The Earl of Portsmouth lived locally and held land in Basingstoke but there is some doubt if he took up all or any of his shares for there is a record that he was chased for making stage payments.

Chart 1



Lord Rivers, then of Stratfield Saye, also took 40 shares and his descendants still held some when the company was wound up in 1866. The third was William Legge, 2nd Earl of Dartmouth; although he did not live locally he held 700 a. of land in the town¹¹ inherited via his wife from the Blunden family and is therefore included on the Basingstoke list. He may have been a prime mover in the venture for he was a major investor in the Birmingham Canal Navigation (Acts 1868 and 1869)¹² which ran close to his then seat, Sandwell Hall, and coal from his mine was carried to the canal at Smethwick. He also sold the land for the wharf and loaned the company £900.¹³ These three aristocrats subscribed 14 per cent of the capital and enhanced the subscription yield locally. Thirty one subscribers from the Basingstoke area committed to £25,300 or 29.4 per cent, with almost half of this coming from the three peers already mentioned. It is interesting to note that the Duke of Bolton of Hackwood, High Steward of Basingstoke, did not contribute in the first list of proprietors and nor did another major landowner, John Jervoise of Herriard, although the latter did so later.

The people most immediately benefiting from the new canal would have been the traders of Basingstoke. A comparison of the list of subscribers with a near contemporary directory¹⁴ shows that £3,800 was raised within the borough (4.3 per cent). The Corporation responded strongly: as an institution it bought £500 of shares, and five of the ten individual aldermen with the Town Clerk

¹¹ Staffordshire Record Office, D3074?G/1/1

¹² Priestley, *Historical Account*, 63

¹³ TNA, RAIL 1019/6, 1800, 1806

¹⁴ Sadler, *Hampshire Directory*, (Winchester, 1784), 59 - 63

bought £1,100 worth of shares. However of the 115 trades and professional people listed in the directory only eight, excluding the five Corporation members, bought shares. Five of the 13 subscribers were professional men, lawyers, doctors or the vicar. Four were maltsters or brewers who would very directly benefit from cheaper bulk transport. There was only one recorded case where one £100 share was purchased by two maltsters, Knight and Penton. It is likely that the minimum payment of £100, (£13,000 in 2015 terms¹⁵), was more than most tradesmen could afford. The initial subscription was insufficient and a second act of 1793 authorised the raising of a further £60,000.¹⁶

Meetings of the Proprietors were initially shared between Basingstoke, meeting at the Crown Inn, and London, normally at the Crown and Anchor Inn in the Strand, but from 1800 they were held in the capital where a substantial number of subscribers lived.¹⁷

Description of the Canal

There were 30 locks on the canal. It was not a narrow boat canal for barges of 72 feet 6 inches long and 13 feet wide could pass through carrying 50 tons.¹⁸ Other than a minor lock at Greywell to keep up the water level through to Basingstoke the top pound of the canal ran for 21 miles from Basingstoke to Ash lock. The major works on this contour stretch were the cuttings and the 1,230 yard tunnel at Greywell which proved to be an ongoing problem. From Ash Lock the canal fell 192 feet through 29 locks to the Wey Navigation. This led to the River Thames and the wharves in London.¹⁹ The springs in the chalk in the Greywell area were the principal source of water²⁰ The barges were horse drawn. Some fly boats, which ran day and night only stopping to change horses, rivalled waggons for speed but generally barges lay over at night.

Reaching Basingstoke

The canal was opened to Odiham in 1793 but exhaustion of funds to complete the last nine miles required a second act, passed in March 1793, to authorise the raising of an additional £60,000²¹. The completion of the 1,230 yard Greywell tunnel in 1793 enabled the canal to open to Basingstoke on 4th September 1794²² but within six weeks a major landslip west of the tunnel halted traffic to Basingstoke until the next summer.

The terminus of the canal in Basingstoke

Figure 3 below shows the canal basin in Basingstoke in relation to the surrounding area on the 1877 map. It was close to the River Loddon at a height of 260'. Much of the basin lay within the small parish of Eastrop with only the western end of the basin and much of the wharf actually within Basingstoke parish. Although the canal was opened to Basingstoke in 1794 and 5,700 tons carried to

¹⁵ <http://safalra.com/other/historical-uk-inflation-price-conversion/> Accessed 1st February 2015

¹⁶ 33George III. Cap.16, 28th March, 1793

¹⁷ TNA, RAIL 1019/6

¹⁸ Priestley, Historical Account, 36

¹⁹ Vine, P.A.L., *London's Lost Route to Basingstoke*, (Stroud 1994),, 205-7

²⁰ Priestley, Historical Account, 36

²¹ 33 George III Cap.16, Royal Assent 28th March 1793

²² TNA, RAIL 1019/6

the town in that year²³ adequate handling facilities were not provided and in 1799 £200 was expended to add a warehouse, saw pits, coal pens and an 'accounting (sic) house'.

By the time of the sale of the canal in 1869 more facilities had been added:

'The Wharf with its valuable Frontages to Oat Street, Basing Rd and Goat Lane. Wharfinger's Residence, outbuildings and large garden, 3 brick and slate built roomy Offices; large Corn, Coal, Bark, Deal and timber sheds and storehouses. Sawpits and sheds. Two power cranes and other conveniences for loading and unloading barges, extensive timber wharf. Gatekeepers residence and garden, 6 thatched cottages with gardens yard and piece of ground adjoining with the timber and board erection thereon together with the Canal and Banks containing about 14a 0 31p'²⁴



{ } 200 m.

Figure 3

Showing the canal basin and surrounding area in 1877 showing its relation with the River Loddon, the shed covering the northern arm of the basin, various warehouses and sheds, a boat house and Richard Wallis' foundry close to Wote Street. (Ordnance Survey 25" to one mile 1877 edition)

Functioning of the Canal

²³ TNA, RAIL 1019/6

²⁴ HRO, 13M48/63/19

It is not possible to give a detailed picture of the trading levels at Basingstoke as the Wharfinger's records are not extant. For the first 70 years of operation the prime sources are the minutes of the meetings of proprietors.

The estimates of tons carried and toll income mentioned above proved to be extremely optimistic. As early as 1797 the Earl of Dartmouth's surveyor commented, 'but it is not likely to pay interest for the large sums of money expended.' He went on to say that it would not be to the advantage of farmers as it lowered the price of corn, 'by bringing in inferior sorts from London at reduced prices.'²⁵ During the lifetime of the original company, i.e. to 1866, the tonnage only exceeded 30,000 tons in three years and this was ironically in the 1830s when the canal was busy carrying materials for the railway which then drew business away from the canal. Basingstoke wharf saw its canal trade fall by 25 per cent, whilst at Odiham, not near a railway, trade only fell by 10 per cent.²⁶ Toll income was rarely above half that originally estimated and rates had to be cut to compete with waggon traffic in the 1820s and particularly after the advent of the railway in 1839.

The company hoped that onward waggon trade would be a significant feature in its trading²⁷ but a report in 1827 suggests that this was not fulfilled, 'The connection with Salisbury, interrupted by an accident 20 years ago has been revived'²⁸. During the Napoleonic Wars onward trading with Southampton, Winchester and the West Country was temporarily boosted as there was a danger of the sea route being threatened by French privateers. In peacetime carriers from Basingstoke wharf to Andover, Alton and Alresford found it difficult to compete with carriers travelling from London and they obtained a 1/8 ½ d per ton reduction²⁹. There was even an abortive plan to continue the canal to the Andover Canal.³⁰ A more realistic aim was a connection with the Kennet and Avon canal starting from Basingstoke or Basing which would have brought Somerset coal and goods from the Midlands to Basingstoke. A line was surveyed in 1824³¹ but not pursued as the landowners were against it.

Management

Initially meetings were held in Basingstoke and the first clerk was Charles Best who was also Town Clerk of Basingstoke. He continued in this role until 1816 although for the last years he was ineffective and was helped by a deputy clerk based in London

Another long serving member was Charles Adams who was the Wharfinger at Basingstoke from the opening of the Canal. In 1819 he was becoming frail and an assistant was appointed. Adams retired in 1823 and was granted a pension of £50 a year. He died in 1828.³²

Charles Headeach, a Basingstoke solicitor, became Clerk in 1827 and remained in post until his death in 1866. He also acted as Wharfinger for a period from 1828. In 1840 he was paid £240 a year³³ and

²⁵ SRO, D3074/G/1/1

²⁶ Vine, 'London's Lost Route', 106

²⁷ TNA, RAIL 1019/6

²⁸ TNA, RAIL 1019/6

²⁹ HRO, 44M69/F10/55/15

³⁰ HRO, Photocopy 582/1

³¹ TNA, RAIL 1019/6, 22 May 1824

³² TNA, Rail 1019/6, years 1819, 1823 and 1829

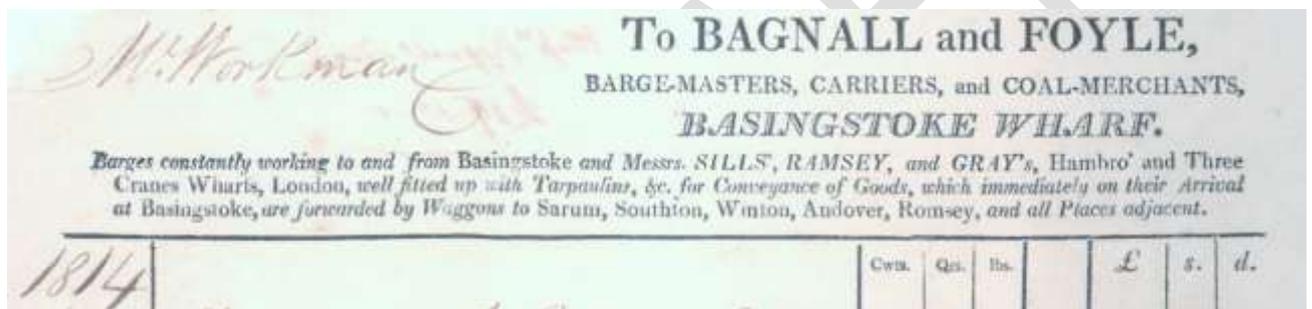
³³ TNA, Rail 1019/6, 1840

he was paid £280 in 1870 even although the Canal Company was in administration.³⁴ It was drastically reduced in 1871. Frederick Bushnell, listed as a timber and coal dealer in 1859, became the Wharf and traffic manager between 1859 and 1871.³⁵

Traffic on the Canal

In 1794 barges left Basingstoke every Thursday at 8 00 a.m. for London and boats from Messrs Sills and Sons of Hambro Wharf Upper Thames Street also left on Thursdays on the day's tide. The cost was 12/- per ton.³⁶ The journey time was three or at most four days.³⁷ The Company gave up trading in its own right as part of an economy measure in 1804 after a period of mismanagement and trade was carried on by private traders. Some make a transitory appearance but Charles Bagnall with various partners was active from c. 1814. The bill head below, figure 4, gives an overview of the partnership's activities. Hambro' Wharf was immediately upstream of Southwark Bridge.

Figure 4



Hampshire Museum Service reference WOC 5226.134.1 DPAAQT 71

³⁴TNA, C30/218

³⁵ White, W, *Directory of Hampshire*, (Sheffield, 1859), 486; Kelly, E.R., *Post Office Directory of Hampshire*, (London 1867), 481

³⁶ Universal British Directory of Trade, Vol 1 (1792) 168

³⁷ Reading Mercury, December 9, 1799

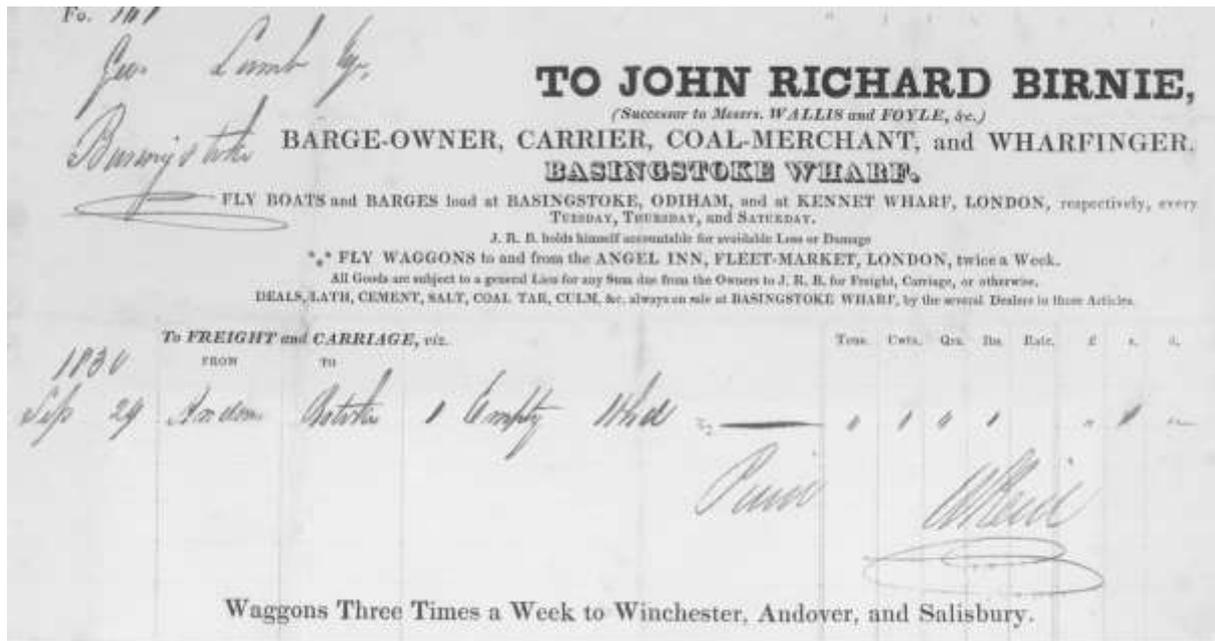


Figure 5. Billhead of John Richard Birnie 1830.

Hampshire Museum Service reference 5226.167.5 DPAAQV01

John Richard Birnie of Eastrop was deputy clerk from 1806. He became clerk in 1816 but resigned in 1827 to become the chief carrier on the canal running a fleet of 12 barges. He took out a 21 year lease on Basingstoke Wharf. The bill head, figure 5 above shows the extent of his activities for in addition to running faster fly boats and barges he ran fly waggons from London and waggons from Basingstoke to Winchester, Andover and Salisbury. He became bankrupt owing £60,000 in 1832 and the Canal Company suffered a major setback³⁸. The 1830 Pigot directory mentions Birnie and Crowley's sending barges on three days of the week to London.³⁹

His business was taken over by Wallis and White and a prospectus of their service is given in the advertisement below. Seven of the places listed are wharfs on the canal but the majority of places would have involved carrier transport on from Basingstoke. It is also interesting that they also ran a waggon from central London twice a week to complement the three times a week barge service.⁴⁰

Figure 6

³⁸ Vine, 'London's Lost Route', 92 -4

³⁹ Pigot, Directory of Hampshire, (1830) 410

⁴⁰ Salisbury Gazette, 7 July 1832

BASINGSTOKE CANAL TRADE.

R. WALLIS & D. S. WHITE respectfully acquaint the Public, that they have purchased the **FLY BOATS AND BARGES**, also the Stock of **WAGGONS, HORSES, &c.** late the property of **JOHN RICHARD BIRNIE**; and that their Barges, well fitted up for the conveyance of Goods, now load regularly at Basingstoke and Odiham, and at the Kennet Wharf, Upper Thames-street, London, respectively every **WEDNESDAY** and **SATURDAY**; and all Goods, on their arrival at the Wharfs, will be forwarded with the greatest care and dispatch.

Goods for their Barges are daily received at the **KENNET WHARF, LONDON**, for the following places:—

Andover	Farnham	Ringwood
Alton	Frimley	Southampton
Alresford	Hartley Row	Salisbury
Amesbury	Hatfordbridge	Stockbridge
Basingstoke	Kingsclere	Winchester
Blackwater	Overton	Wilton
Broughton	Odiham	Whitechurch
Bishop's Waltham	Romsey	Warnborough and
Crookham	Redbridge	places adjacent,

The Isle of Wight, Guernsey, and Jersey.

A Waggon to and from the Angel Inn, Farringdon-street, London, **TWICE A WEEK**; also Waggon **THREE TIMES A WEEK** from this Wharf to Winchester, Andover, and Salisbury.

NEWCASTLE COALS, of the best and second quality, also **CULM**, for Sale on the most reasonable terms.

Basingstoke Wharf, June 22, 1832.

A bill heading of 1832 confirms the above services operated.⁴¹ but by 1847 R Wallis and Co, although still giving an address at the Wharf, only offered one fly boat to London on Fridays but also ran waggons 'per railway' from the Angel Inn Farringdon St London daily.⁴² By 1854 R Wallis & Co billed themselves as Corn and Coal merchant with an office near the railway station⁴³. There is no mention of the canal.

In addition to newspaper advertisements trade directories were an important way for bringing the canal's facilities to the attention of business people although they need to be treated with care. The 1782 directory⁴⁴ declared the canal 'is now finished... and has already proved to be of considerable advantage to the town', and yet we have seen the canal did not open until 1794.

However the reports in directories from 1830 give a more accurate of the state of the canal with two firms sending barges carrying up to 50 tons to and from London on three days a week.⁴⁵ The opening of the railway in 1839 forced the canal to lower its tariffs (and therefore its income). The tolls were cut by 50% in 1844.⁴⁶ The canal company took new initiatives to counter railway competition. In 1840 a pitched market at the Wharf saw 300 tons of cheese sold but this traffic was soon lost to the

⁴¹ Hampshire Museum Service WOC5226.891.1 DPAARU51

⁴² Hampshire Museum Service WOC5226.901.2 DPAAR078

⁴³ Hampshire Museum Service PPAARU81

⁴⁴ 'Universal British Directory' 168

⁴⁵ Pigot, 'Directory 1830' 410

⁴⁶ Vine, 'London's Lost Route', 108

railway.⁴⁷ The 1844 directory, 10 years after the opening of the railway, described the trade as 'flourishing' with three boats a week from R. Wallis and Henry Brand's wharfs.⁴⁸ This may have presented an overly optimistic view for by 1850 the committee was recommending applying for an Act to sell the canal.⁴⁹ This extreme measure was postponed by the upturn of traffic to the Aldershot area in the 1850s to build the new military camp. In Basingstoke itself by 1852 the impact of the railway was more marked for it was said that the canal traffic was in some measure diminished by the railway lines. The Canal Company itself was again carrying freight with George Brand, 'according to freight', suggesting that regular fixed day services were no longer sustainable.⁵⁰ In 1867 although the canal is mentioned with the railway as materially increasing the communications to London no mention is made of its freight services to the capital.⁵¹ This is supported by the brief entry in the 1875 directory, 'It is also on the Basingstoke Canal (now disused)'.⁵² Directories from 1880 to 1931 simply repeated the statement, 'Here is also the terminus of the Basingstoke Canal'.

Trade Directories give information about the functioning of the canal from the mid-19th century. White's directory of 1859 mentions two timber merchants and a coal merchant at the wharf.⁵³ Revenue was still being generated by trade to the east of the tunnel, especially in the Aldershot and Woking areas but there is no toll income recorded at Basingstoke.⁵⁴

Although there is a boat house recorded on the 1877 map there is no evidence that a pleasure boat station operated from Basingstoke with rowing boats and punts. There are records of barges being hired for group outings as far as Greywell tunnel⁵⁵ and also reports of Basingstoke people taking the train to Winchfield and walking to the boat station at the Little Wharf at Odiham to hire boats.⁵⁶

Liquidation of the Canal Company.

Those townspeople who invested in the Canal Company quickly found that it was not a sound investment. By 1800 £100 shares were sold for only £30 and by 1834 they were valued at only £5.⁵⁷ In 1850 a resolution advocating the sale of the canal was not proceeded with⁵⁸ and, although the improvement of trade relating to the army's move to Aldershot delayed the inevitable, on 4th June 1866 an application was made to the Court of Chancery for the winding up of the Company. The liquidator's very precisely kept records showed that the canal had minimal maintenance during this time with the only income coming from tolls and some rents. It is interesting that Frederick Bushell, the Wharfinger at Basingstoke, paid in no tolls, suggesting that little or no traffic was generated at Basingstoke.

The 1867 directory mentions the canal but makes no mention of traders whilst the 1875 edition describes the canal as now disused. A fuller account is found in 1878 which mentions the financial situation of the company and states that the canal, 'closed some years ago and since then the

⁴⁷ Jackson's Oxford Journal 6 June 1840; Vine, 'London's Lost Route', 104

⁴⁸ Pigot, *Directory of Hampshire*, (1844), 9 and 12

⁴⁹ Vine, 'London's Lost Route', 109

⁵⁰ Slater, *Directory of Hampshire*, (1852) 11 and 14

⁵¹ Kelly, ER, *Post Office Directory of Hampshire*, London (1867), 481

⁵² Kelly, ER, *Post Office Directory of Hampshire*, London (1875), 27

⁵³ White, W, *Directory of Hampshire*, 1859, 486

⁵⁴ TNA, C30/218

⁵⁵ Attwood, A, *An illustrated history of Basingstoke*, Derby (2001 75; Vine, 'London's Lost Route', 149

⁵⁶ Odiham boats

⁵⁷ Vine, 'London's Lost Route', 129.

⁵⁸ HRO, Copy 582/2

(Greywell) tunnel has fallen in.⁵⁹ A sale catalogue prepared in 1869 makes no mention of the canal being blocked but other sources suggest that this happened in 1872 and it did not reopen until 1884.⁶⁰

A sewage crisis

From its earliest days the Canal Company was keen to obtain additional supplies of water to maintain levels to the west of the main spring source at Greywell. Early in the 19-th century they obtained agreement from the Paving Commissioners to divert the stream that ran down Wote Street to the River Loddon into the canal basin. During the century houses adjacent to the stream began to empty effluent into it. The problem was contained whilst there was a slow eastward drift along the canal but after it was blocked sewerage stagnated in the basin and the canal and led to complaints by residents⁶¹. In 1873 the newly formed Urban Sanitary Authority sought to require the new owner of the Canal, William St Aubyn, to remove sewage from the canal. He counter claimed that the authority was responsible for the separation of sewage from the stream and threatened legal action. In 1875 Charles Dommies, who had bought the canal from St Aubyn, did take court action and the Sanitary Authority had to pay damages and arrange a temporary solution of building a retaining tank on land bought from the canal company which they had to empty regularly.⁶² The Sanitary Authority had dragged their feet, fearing the cost implications, and the situation was not completely resolved until the Borough Council built a new sewage works in Swing Swang Lane in 1880⁶³.

Disruption to Traffic

Basingstoke's functioning as an inland port at the end of a long cul-de-sac depended on the canal not being impeded for the passage of barges. Blockages could be ascribed to either factors relating to weather conditions or to civil engineering issues. Between 1800 and 1840 the reports to shareholders listed 23 cases of disruption to navigation, the longest being for two months.⁶⁴

Navigation could be impeded by either lack of water, too much water, leading to burst banks, or the transformation of water into ice. Droughts giving low water levels necessitated only half loading of barges and this was recorded in the years 1800 to 1803.⁶⁵ Freezing conditions resulting in ice blockages appeared to be a more frequent problem. Ice boats were used to try to keep the canal open but these were frequently inadequate and the canal was closed for extended periods. It was closed for a month in 1801⁶⁶, in 1813-4 the closure lasted from Christmas to 10 February and in 1826-7 the closure was for 40 days⁶⁷. These closures meant that the barge proprietors had to hire waggons which affected their profits. By 1828 locks in Surrey which had been in place for over 30 years required repair and replacement.⁶⁸

⁵⁹ White, W, *Directory of Hampshire*, (1878) 129

⁶⁰ Rosenthal, L, 'Owners of the Basingstoke Canal' Basingstoke Canal News Letter, 223, Autumn 2009

⁶¹ HRO, 145M71/1/7/1; TNA MH/10683; TNA MH10684

⁶² Rosenthal, L, Owners, 14

⁶³ Rosenthal, L, Owners 16

⁶⁴ TNA, RAIL 1019/6

⁶⁵ TNA, RAIL1019/6, 18th February 1802

⁶⁶ TNA, RAIL 1019/6 18 Feb 1802

⁶⁷ TNA, RAIL 1019/6 25 May 1827

⁶⁸ TNA, RAIL 1019/6 25 May 1828

A major civil engineering problem was the deep cuttings and tunnel at Greywell. Within six weeks of the opening of the canal there was a landslip in the cutting at the west end of the tunnel on 4 September 1794. The canal was not reopened until the summer of 1795 necessitating expensive waggon carriage from Greywell or Odiham to Basingstoke⁶⁹ Another landslip threatened navigation in 1804⁷⁰, 25 feet of the inner lining of the tunnel⁷¹ fell in 1813 and the tunnel itself partially fell in 1835 and required extensive repair.⁷² It was also blocked for a period of years from 1871 to 1884. A major collapse in the 1930s permanently severed the link.⁷³

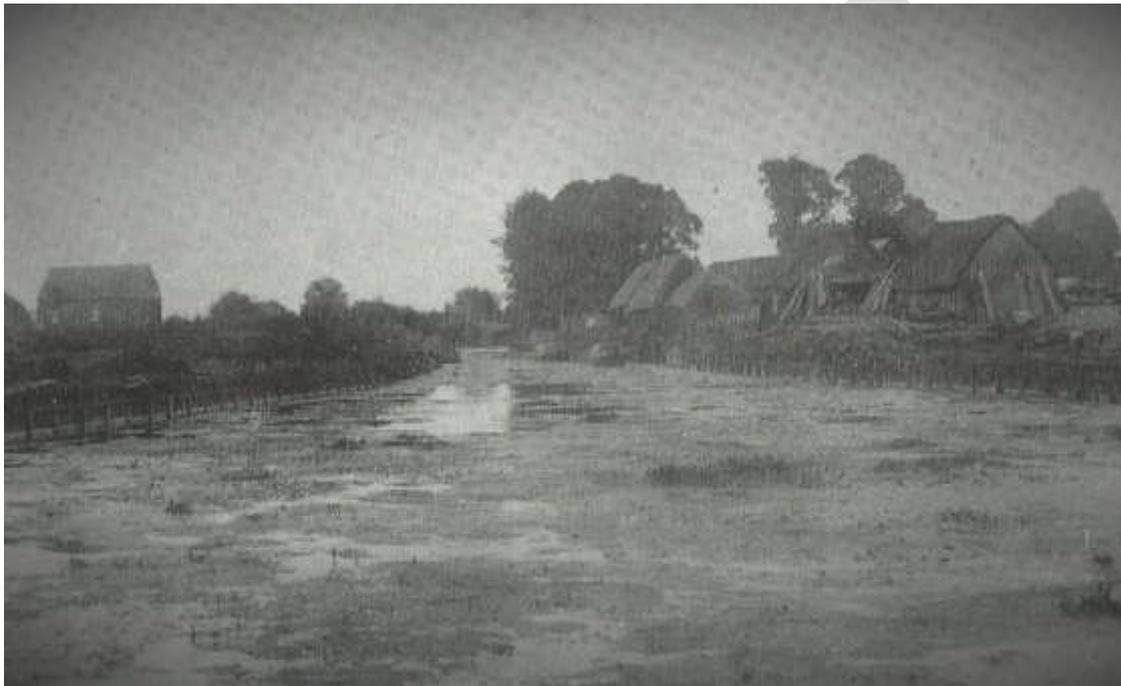


Figure 7

Basingstoke Wharf in 1904. Taken from the western end of the basin at Wote Street looking east towards Eastrop bridge. Two barges laid up on the south bank were formerly used by the Hampshire Brick and Tile Company. The only known photo of the basin. (P.A.L. Vine)

A final trading initiative

Between 1874 and 1895 the canal had four rather dubious owners interspersed by three periods of liquidation. In 1895 Sir Frederick Hunt bought the canal and replaced a small brick making activity at Up Nately by a much larger concern, the Hampshire Brick and Tile Company. This operated between 1896/7 to August 1900 with peak production in 1899/1900 of 13,500 tons⁷⁴. In 1898 4,700 tons of building materials and machinery was carried the 5 miles to Up Nately and in 1899 3,175 tons of coal was delivered to fire the kilns. Production of bricks started in 1899 and that year and 1900 194 barge trips carried 5,594 tons of bricks to Basing or Basingstoke⁷⁵. However some bricks developed

⁶⁹ Vine, 'London's Lost Route', 41

⁷⁰ TNA, RAIL 1019/6

⁷¹ TNA, RAIL 1019/6

⁷² TNA, RAIL 1019/6

⁷³ Vine, 'London's Lost Route', 184

⁷⁴ Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society ledger H4

⁷⁵ Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society ledger H4

faults owing to imperfections in the clay and this combined with a major breach in the canal at Woking in September 1899 put in jeopardy this last initiative at the western end of the canal and the Brick Company went into liquidation in July 1900.⁷⁶

Carriage of foodstuffs and general merchandize ceased in in August 1900. A few more barges reached Basingstoke mostly with timber for White's yard and sand for Wallis & Steevens but the last recorded barge tying up at Basingstoke was recorded in February 1910.⁷⁷ The last attempt to pass a barge to Basingstoke came in autumn 1913 when the aptly named Basingstoke carrying a token cargo of foundry sand for Wallis and Steevens only got as far as Basing wharf after the dry bed from Up Nately had to be refilled with water⁷⁸



⁷⁶ Vine, 'London's Lost Route', 143-4

⁷⁷ Vine, 'London's Lost Route', 174

⁷⁸ Harmsworth, T, 'Last attempt to get to Basingstoke', Basingstoke Canal Society Newsletter, Autumn 2000, 10-12

Figure 8. Basingstoke Canal basin site in 1930. Much of the basin has been filled in and is occupied by White's timber yard. The north part of the site is now occupied by the cattle market which later moved north closer to the railway.

The Final Years

After World War One the canal basin was filled in until by 1930 only a remnant of the eastern end remained (see figure 8). A cattle market was located here in the 1930s. The western part became a bus station with a cinema at the north western corner. When the Central area was redeveloped in the 1970s New Market Square was built over part of the site with the redeveloped bus station occupying part of the site. Today (2016) Festival Place has replaced New Market Square.⁷⁹

In the 1980s the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society proposed a 'Last Five Mile Project' to make a footpath route from Greywell to Basingstoke⁸⁰. Others suggested recreating the canal from Basingstoke to Old Basing as a leisure amenity⁸¹ but this came to nothing. In 2016 all that remains is some landscaping in Eastrop Park.



Figure 9

The site of the canal basin in the 1970s with the bus station beyond New Market Square in the foreground. This is now under the Festival Place shopping centre.

⁷⁹ Stokes, E., *The Making of Basingstoke*, 2003, Basingstoke, aerial photos p 145

⁸⁰ HRO, 30A13/D2(1)

⁸¹ Basingstoke Gazette, 15th December 2000